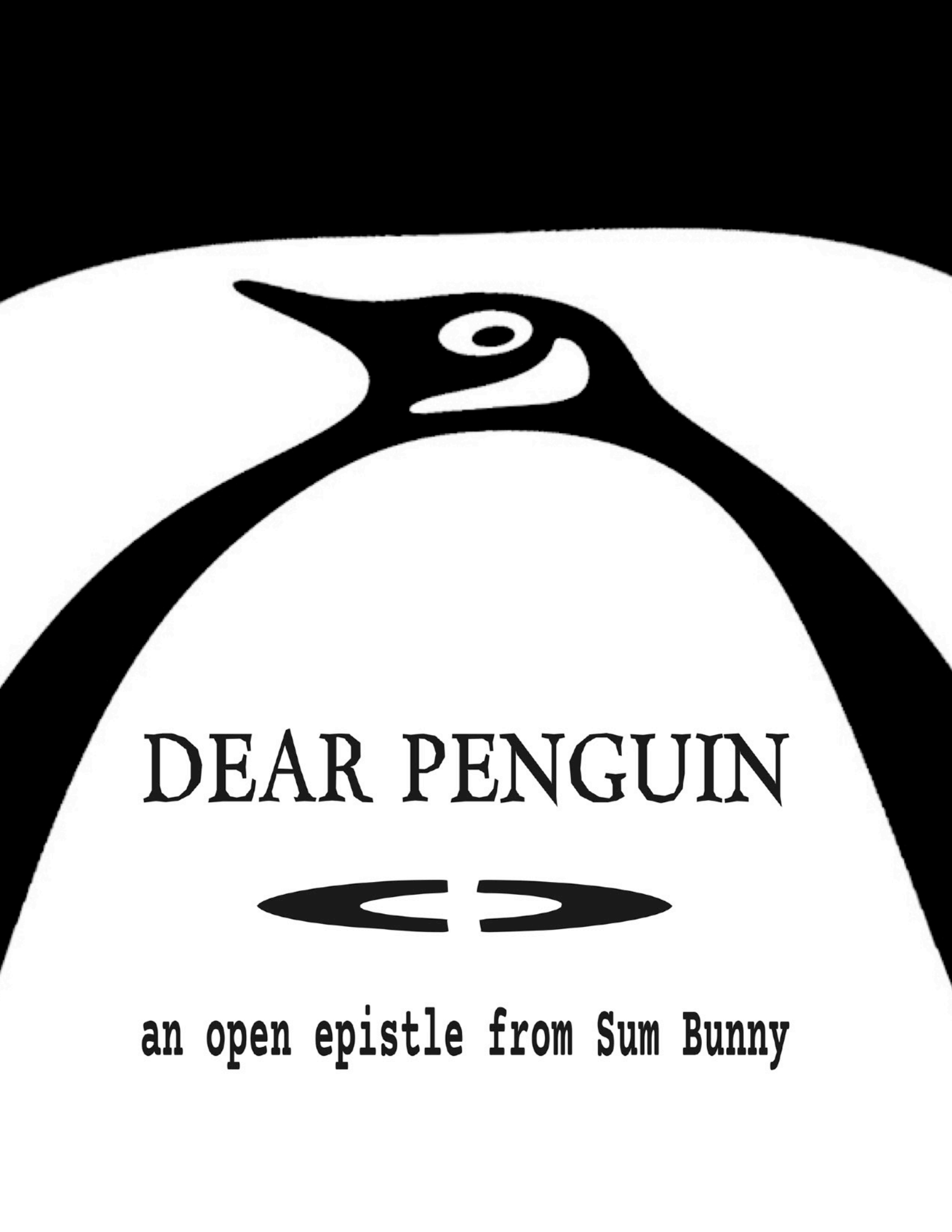


DEAR PENGUIN

an open epistle from Sum Bunny

APPEAL TO THE PENGUIN

From a Lifelong Reader Who Never Thought He'd Have to Write This

Dear Penguin,

I grew up with you.

Your paperbacks were the first books I bought with my own allowance—the first ones I folded into jacket pockets, the first ones I underlined until the margins looked like small thunderstorms. I trusted your little orange spine more than most adults.

You were the doorway.
The ticket.
The companion.
The strange bird who smuggled literature into the hands of kids who couldn't afford hardcovers.

You taught me how to think.

And so it hurts—deeply—to watch you turn against the library that is trying, against enormous odds, to keep the memory of the world alive.

I don't write this in anger.
I write it in sorrow.

Do you remember Allen Lane?

Your founder—Allen Lane—stood on a train platform in 1934, frustrated that he couldn't find a single good book he could afford. So he created Penguin with one radical idea:

"Quality books should cost no more than a pack of cigarettes."

That was the dream:
Make knowledge light.
Make culture portable.
Make wisdom inexpensive enough for anyone to carry in a coat pocket.

Penguin was born to **liberate** ideas, not to lock them behind gates.

This is why it feels so strange—so painful—to see Penguin (now Penguin Random House, though still carrying the same bird on the spine) help lead a lawsuit that removed half a million books from the hands of readers. Not pirates. Not profiteers. Just human beings hungry to learn.

You were the publisher that proved ideas could fly.
Why are you helping build cages?

A Necessary Acknowledgment (So No One Can Dodge the Point)

Yes—authors deserve to be paid.
Yes—publishers deserve sustainability.

But suing a nonprofit library does neither.

The Internet Archive wasn't selling your books.
It wasn't stealing them.
It wasn't undermining the value of literature.

It was doing what libraries have always done:
preserving culture and lending it to the public.

Disabling a library doesn't protect authors.
It only restricts readers—the very readers who become lifelong supporters of books.

Study after study shows that **library discovery increases book sales**, boosts author visibility, builds audiences, and supports midlist and emerging writers. Libraries don't eat the book economy. They *grow* it.

Which brings us to the wound beneath the wound:

When you starve the library, you starve your own future.

Libraries create readers.
Readers become buyers.
Penguin's entire legacy rests on generations of curious minds raised by libraries.

Attacking the library is not protection.
It is **eating your own seed corn**.

And there have always been minds more clever than the systems designed to contain them—kids on long bus rides, workers reading on lunch breaks, brilliant teenagers in rural towns far from bookstores.

Those were your readers.
They could be again.

I Am Not Asking You to Go Back.

I Am Asking You to Evolve.

Allen Lane didn't found Penguin to protect the past.
He founded it to **invent the future** of reading.

Don't regress into scarcity models.
Don't cling to artificial limitations.
Don't let fear shrink your wingspan.

Be brave again.

Be the first major publisher to embrace open standards.
Be the one who champions library lending instead of litigating against it.
Be the pioneer who invents the **digital paperback**—affordable, portable, democratic.

Lead the world in imagining what a 21st-century publisher *should* be.

Because for the first time in history, humanity has a library with global reach:

Decentralized.
Resilient.
Alive.
A memory that cannot burn as Alexandria burned.
A mirror that reflects all of us—not just the polished parts.

We are the clever minds the old system wasn't built for.
But now we finally have a system built for us.

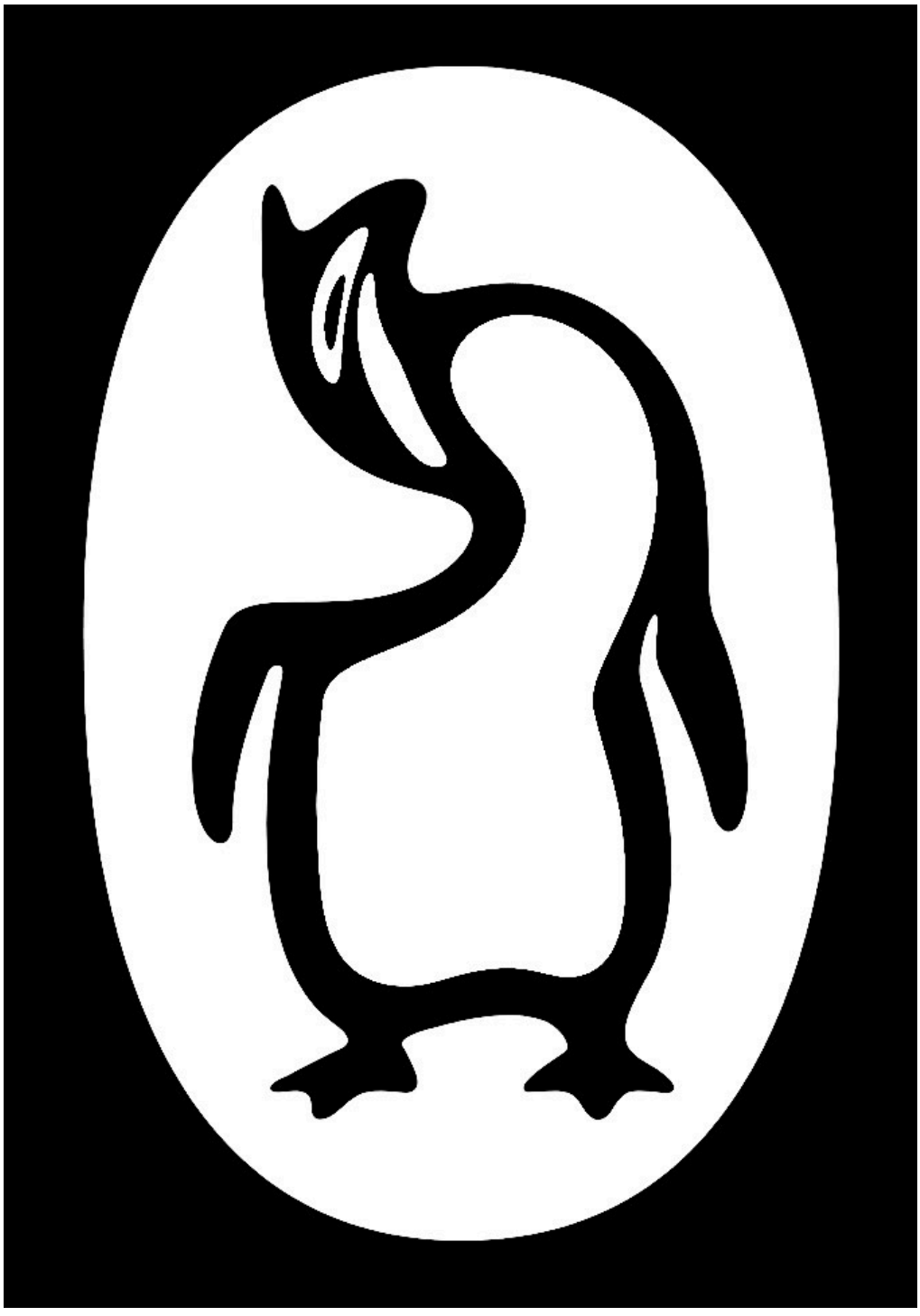
Penguin, please.
This is not about law.
This is about legacy.

You were the bird who proved culture could fly.
Don't become the force that weighs it down.

Come home.
Not to the past—
but to the future you once dreamed into existence.

With hope, with gratitude, and with the ache of someone who loved you for a very long time,

Sum Bunny
A lifelong reader.



FREE FLASH